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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to help state policymakers understand their relatively new role in improving the academic performance of local schools and districts. The first section, "Intervention Decision-Making Framework," focuses on the intervention decision making framework model, performance criteria, strategic criteria, diagnostic interventions, corrective interventions, targets and tactics, and exit criteria. The second section, "State Interventions in Districts," focuses on reviews of six states: West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois. The third section, "District Interventions in Schools," looks at the Chicago Public Schools, New York City Chancellor's District, and Massachusetts. The final two sections present conclusions, recommendations and questions for policymakers. Two appendices include a list of interviewees and an excerpt from "Scholastic Reviews find 17 Activities Common Across Successful Schools" (Faun S. Fishback). (SM)

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Center for Education Policy

School and District Intervention: A Decision-Making Framework for Policymakers

Prepared by
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For
The Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education

Winter 2002

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The Center for Education Policy in the School of Education of the University of Massachusetts Amherst was developed to connect the resources of the University to the major education policy issues of the day, with the dual goals of improving public decision-making and enriching scholarly activity. The Center works in an independent and non-partisan way to fulfill the University's land-grant mission of public service and outreach, with a particular focus on state-level issues of importance in Massachusetts and nationally.

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School and District Intervention Decision Making Framework

Introduction

In virtually every state in the union, standards-based education reform has spawned statewide student assessment systems and a variety of ways to hold the adults in the education system accountable for the performance of their students. However, once a state has set up an assessment and accountability system, the challenge remains: in what ways can a state intervene to "turn around" schools and districts whose students are not meeting state learning standards?

Traditionally, states intervened primarily in cases of fiscal mismanagement. However, in the era of standards-based reform, states are increasingly intervening to improve the academic performance of local schools and districts (Seder, 2000, Duffy, 2001). This paper seeks to help state policymakers understand this relatively new role, and consists of the following three sections: (1) a general framework for intervention decision-making; (2) examples of intervention strategies at the school and district levels; and (3) a list of conclusions, recommendations and concrete questions to guide state-level decision-making.

Intervention Decision-Making Framework

In considering state intervention to turn around failing schools, a medical analogy may be useful as a starting point. In assessing a person's health, a physician needs to determine whether a patient is ill, diagnose the condition that is causing the illness, and prescribe remedies and/or further tests appropriate to the patient's condition.

State policymakers must make analogous distinctions between diagnoses and remedies in holding schools accountable for student performance. Based on both the theoretical and empirical literature on accountability in education and our concrete case studies of the current "state of the art" in intervention efforts, the framework described below focuses on criteria (diagnoses) and interventions (remedies) that policymakers might consider in developing strategies to turn around failing schools.

There are many differences in accountability systems within states. For the purposes of this paper, we examine the process by which outside intervention into schools and/or districts is determined—how a school or district's condition is diagnosed, what intervention will look like, and when and how intervention will end. To begin, it is important to distinguish between criteria and interventions.

Criteria are the guidelines or standards by which a state determines whether action is necessary and, if so, what its targets are for action, based on school/district performance and on state strategic and capacity considerations.

Interventions occur when state criteria for action are met, and include both diagnostic and corrective activities. (School improvement planning, technical assistance, rewards, sanctions, school takeover, reconstitution, and closure fall into this category.)

School and District Intervention Decision Making Framework

Our framework for analyzing different states' strategies for turning around under-performing schools or districts divides these overall categories into the following sub-categories:

Performance Criteria,
Strategic Criteria,
Diagnostic Interventions, and
Corrective Interventions.

The particularities of interventions can be further described in terms of
Targets and
Tactics.

And one final set of criteria completes the framework:
Exit Criteria.

The following model graphic summarizes the Intervention Decision-Making Framework. A more detailed explanation of the framework follows. This framework will be the basis for summarizing intervention strategies in other states and cities.

Intervention Decision-Making Framework – THE MODEL

Performance Criteria	**Performance Criteria** are the standards and measures according to which a school (or district) is declared to be under-performing. These criteria may include: student test scores attendance rates dropout rates student scores disaggregated by race, ethnicity and SES
Strategic Criteria	**Strategic Criteria** are other criteria used to determine in which school or district situations the state will intervene and to what degree. These include capacity and political considerations.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Diagnostic Intervention** is a first stage of intervention in which the state analyzes the situation of a school or district to determine the appropriate tactics and targets for corrective action. *(Note: Many states have a general approach, such as a focus on "instruction" or "leadership." Interventions will often be customized within the boundaries of the general approach.)*
Corrective Intervention	**Corrective Interventions** emerge from the diagnostic process and include a wide range of potential remedies, including self-study, financial assistance, expert assistance, professional development, rewards for progress, on-site audits/monitoring, probation, suspension of accreditation, transfer or replacement of staff, transfer of/choice for students, takeover, reconstitution, or closure.
Target	Tactic
Targets are the people, practices, or organizational structures that the intervention impacts.	**Tactics** are the specific things done with or to the people, practices, and organizational structures targeted by the intervention.
Exit Criteria	**Exit Criteria** are the criteria according to which a decision to conclude or change the intervention is made.

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Note: Terms such as "under-performing" and "critically under-performing" are used in this report to create a consistent vocabulary and are not necessarily the terms all states use. Within each of the examples below, the actual terms a state uses are given.

Performance Criteria

Performance criteria are the measures according to which a school or district is declared to be under-performing, and to what degree. To continue our medical analogy, they are like the measures of body temperature, blood pressure, and other threshold-type indicators that may signify illness and trigger a physician's search for a cure. Performance criteria generally include student results on state-administered tests (like MCAS), but may also include indicators such as attendance rates, percentage of certified teachers, and mobility and dropout rates (Quality Counts, 2001). In some cases SES (socioeconomic status) data are used to disaggregate student performance across student sub-groups, to ensure aggregate performance does not obscure inequities in sub-group performance (Texas Educational Agency, 1/4/2002).

States vary in their standards or how they identify the "degree of tolerance" beyond which schools or districts will be declared under-performing. States also vary in the types of expectations used as performance criteria. Some states set absolute, across-the-board expectations for all schools to achieve; some require schools to increase their performance by a certain percentage each year; and others use a combination of absolute and improvement goals (Goertz, Duffy & Le Floch, 2001).

Strategic Criteria

In addition to performance criteria, states (implicitly or explicitly) employ other criteria to determine in which school or district situations they will intervene and to what degree. Whereas performance criteria involve policymakers looking outward at the performance of schools, strategic criteria involve looking inward, at the state's capacity to intervene. In many states, there are more under-performing schools and districts based on performance criteria than the state has capacity to address. Policymakers have to decide where to target their resources.

Do they target a small number of critically under-performing schools/districts which will require years of sustained activity? Do they target schools/districts that are "on the cusp" according to performance indicators, hoping to build momentum with some early successes? Can they do some of each? Ultimately, the interventions chosen involve judgments based on a combination of performance and strategic criteria. Often the judgments on strategic criteria are somewhat subjectively made.

Diagnostic Interventions

Once a state has decided that a school or district meets its criteria for intervention, it has to decide how exactly to intervene. (In medical terms, once a physician determines that a patient is sick, the causes of illness must be identified to determine an appropriate remedy.) A diagnostic intervention allows the state to analyze the situation of a school or district and develop a customized intervention that meets the school's or district's needs.

A relevant theme from the literature on change strategies (Fullan, 2001; Ross, 2001) is that, to the degree possible, diagnostic interventions (and corrective interventions as well) should be done <u>with</u> local participants, not <u>to</u> them. Often, the first intervention by a state is to work with those at the school level to identify causes of under-performance and to develop an improvement plan. In some

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cases, assistance with self-improvement planning and monitoring of progress toward clear improvement goals may be sufficient state strategies for turning around failing schools or districts. More intensively, a diagnostic intervention may consist of a complete, external audit of a school's or district's practices and circumstances, leading to a corrective intervention phase.

An important function of diagnostic interventions is to establish the appropriate educational targets for intervention—the school or the district, the principal or the teachers, finances or professional development. For example, the school or classroom level may appear to be the natural unit to examine for instructional problems, but district failures may in fact be the cause of school-level problems or at least the best place to turn for sustainable remedies. An effective, data-based diagnostic intervention is also an important means of breaking out of one's initial "theory of action" or traditional intervention paradigm (helping to get beyond blaming the kids or the community). Without an appropriate diagnostic intervention, corrective interventions may be aiming at the wrong targets.

Corrective Interventions

Corrective interventions emerge from the diagnostic process and include a wide range of potential remedies, including self-study, financial assistance, expert assistance, professional development, rewards for progress, on-site audits/monitoring, probation, suspension of accreditation, transfer or replacement of staff, transfer of/choice for students, takeover, reconstitution, or closure[1]. Many states use experts external to the under-performing school or district to provide customized assistance based on information from the diagnostic intervention. Using outside expertise in conjunction with a customized plan is a way for states to avoid "one size fits all" policies that may be poorly matched to the complexities of particular schools or districts.

We need hardly belabor the medical analogy to emphasize how important the diagnostic intervention is to the selection of appropriate and effective corrective interventions. One crucial distinction in educational diagnoses is that between will (or motivation) and skill. A school's under-performance may be attributed to teachers who lack the will or motivation to try hard. This diagnosis would imply remedies focused on motivational enhancement through negative sanctions (e.g., threat of or actual firing or transfer) or positive incentives (e.g., merit pay or bonuses tied to student performance). Alternatively, the diagnosis could attribute under-performance primarily to skill and knowledge factors (such as the teachers' lack of pedagogical skill in employing effective classroom management strategies or lack of knowledge of reading strategies for bilingual students). This conception of the underlying problem implies remedies primarily related to skill development and positive capacity building (e.g., professional development)[2].

Targets and Tactics

In planning state interventions, it is helpful to categorize various intervention options in terms of targets and tactics. The "targets" of an intervention are the people, practices, or organizational structures that the intervention is intended to affect. The "tactics" are the specific things done with or to these people, practices, and organizational structures.

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[1] Last adapted from Duffy (2001).

[2] To complicate things further, "lack of will/motivation" may be the result of lack of resources, excess demands, and/or a lack of skills/training, which could make punitive sanctions counter-productive.

Exit Criteria

Exit criteria are a way of establishing when an intervention can be declared a success—or alternatively, when an intervention must be declared a failure and a different intervention must be tried. These criteria may be the same as the initial criteria, or information from the diagnostic intervention may be used to establish additional criteria aimed at ensuring that improvements are sustainable.

Intervention in a school often happens before a school is declared critically under-performing. Jennifer O'Day (1999) suggests that early intervention is the best strategy to improve academic achievement within schools. Diagnostic types of interventions such as improvement planning and some levels of technical assistance occur at the state and district level prior to the more extreme cases of school takeovers and reconstitution. In the absence of early intervention, states must decide how to approach academically failing schools. In the section that follows, the decision framework will be used to explore how other states and large school districts approach school and district accountability.

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State Interventions in Schools and Districts

The states reviewed below are West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, New Jersey, Texas, Illinois, and Massachusetts.[3] These states, examined through the decision-making framework, illustrate both commonalities and differences, as well as the many challenges and compromises that come with state intervention into local school operations.

Each of these states has statewide content standards. With the exception of New Jersey, each holds schools and districts accountable based on state-established criteria. Performance criteria, however, differ widely, and approaches to diagnostic and corrective intervention reflect different levels of state capacity for intervention.

The starting point, process and timeline with which each state has implemented school/district accountability systems also vary. Some states have phased in the accountability system by starting at the school level, and others have begun or focused intervention at the district level (New Jersey, Texas). Other states were selected because of the urban district challenges they face (Illinois, New Jersey) and the length of time these states have been intervening within these districts. And, in one instance, the state is shifting its focus from school intervention to district intervention to address issues of capacity and sustainable improvement.

The information on each of these states is a snapshot of the intervention strategies currently being implemented. Though this does not provide a definitive picture, it is useful in understanding the challenges of intervention and the value of having a well-planned process. It is hoped that the framework will be useful both as a common framework for comparison and as a planning tool for further design efforts.

West Virginia

West Virginia has reconstitution authority in schools and districts (which are county systems) and permits students to transfer from under-performing schools to other public schools (Quality Counts 2002). To date, West Virginia has intervened in several schools and four districts that have improved enough to return control of the schools and one of the districts to the local community. Upon first examination, this appeared to be an example of an actual "turnaround" after state intervention in a school or district. After further examination, it appears that the reason for this quick turnaround lay in the relative ease of attainment of the performance criteria and exit criteria that were employed.

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[3] Information on each of the states for the description and the decision-making framework was gathered through a literature review, review of state education agency documentation on school and district accountability, phone interviews with state department of education officials in each of the states, and phone interviews with state and national researchers. A list of interviewees is in Attachment A.

WEST VIRGINIA – School Intervention

Performance Criteria	Stanford 9 Student Scores (primary) Attendance Drop-out Rate Though these are the primary reasons for any intervention, WV DOE has 99 standards for evaluating schools.
Strategic Criteria	Given limited state capacity, only the bottom 25% of under-performing schools are assigned a Distinguished Educator. Remaining schools are assigned a state liaison who is responsible for providing regular communication between the school and WVDOE, and who assists the school in designing and procuring professional development opportunities.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Distinguished Educator** is appointed. **School Improvement Teams** consisting of teachers, principals and superintendents from outside the community work with the Distinguished Educator to develop and mandate school-specific improvement strategies. This becomes the blueprint for the Distinguished Educator.
Corrective Intervention	**Distinguished Educator** (DE) is assigned to the school to implement the recommendations of the School Improvement Plan through instructional leadership by mentoring teachers and administrators and facilitating staff development.
Target	**Tactic**
Students	Students are able to transfer to the school closest to where they live that has not been determined to be under-performing.
Teachers	Teachers are observed in the classroom. The DE works with individuals and groups to improve instructional leadership within the classroom. Professional development and coaching is concentrated on instruction.
Principal	The DE works with the current principal. West Virginia does not allow the DOE to fire principals though they are attempting to change this. The DE focuses on instilling a sense of instructional leadership within the principal. The theory behind this is that the "principal ought to be the best teacher in the school."
Improvement Plan	School Improvement Teams (consisting of teachers, principals and superintendents from outside the community) work with the Distinguished Educator to develop and mandate school-specific improvement strategies. This becomes the blueprint for the Distinguished Educator.
Instruction	The DE is given the authority to work with teachers and DE to improve instructional strategies through mentoring faculty within the school.
Organization	The organization remains intact. There are no specific strategies to change the organization.
Exit Criteria	**Same as the initial performance criteria**

The Distinguished Educator is a principal who is either retired or currently working in the West Virginia public education system. The DE is considered an employee of the state and depending on the level of underperformance within the school may be given authority to make all decisions in the school (overriding the incumbent principal if necessary) or may work in partnership with the principal.

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School and District Intervention Decision Making Framework

The West Virginia Department of Education has been intervening in schools for over five years. Last year is the first year they used the Distinguished Educator model. Prior to this they assigned a DOE employee to be the liaison to an under-performing school. According to the Executive Director of School Improvement in West Virginia, schools turn around in one to two years. School turnaround is defined by school performance goals set by the state on the Stanford 9. West Virginia is planning on implementing a state student assessment system within the next few years.

In this case, the nationally norm-referenced Stanford 9 criteria are not as rigorous as standards within other states. Consequently, school improvement occurs with more rapidity and frequency, once the state intervenes. One problem with using exit criteria that are the same as the initial performance criteria is that once a school improves on the Stanford 9 and other factors, the state moves out. In some instances the school will return to the list of under-performing schools in subsequent years because there is an inability for the school to sustain improvement.

The School Improvement executive director identified two key intervention targets: instructional leadership and teacher turnover. Instructional leadership means that instruction addresses both the explicit curriculum and the needs of individual students, and all aspects of the school are run to ensure this. Instructional leadership is the principal's responsibility. Without this leadership, it is extremely difficult to lower teacher turnover.

WEST VIRGINIA – District Intervention

Performance Criteria	District intervention occurs whenever the West Virginia Board of Education determines that a county (district) school system is not providing an "adequate, quality education." This is determined by the same three primary standards as the school intervention, supplemented by the 99 more specific standards.
Strategic Criteria	Decision of the Board of Education based on recommendations from the diagnostic intervention.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Office of Education Reform Audit** – This is an audit which occurs every four years in all schools in the state, but in cases of intervention, the Board of Education directs the OERA to conduct a district audit.
Corrective Intervention	**Superintendent hired by the Department of Education** and is considered an employee of the state. The Department of Education Liaison is the contact at the state level who provides regular communication to the district. **Recommendations Report based on Audit.** The new superintendent, a team of exemplary educators and state DOE employees write recommendations on any areas in which the district is in non-compliance. This report becomes a roadmap for the new superintendent.

Target	Tactic
Superintendent	Superintendent resigns or is dismissed.
Board of Education	Local Board is stripped of powers except on financial and personnel matters. Local Board meets twice a year with the state board of education to open lines of communication and discuss progress of the district.
Exit Criteria	Established in the **Recommendations Report** (see Diagnostic Intervention) based on audit findings.

West Virginia is just beginning its district intervention process. Only one of the intervention districts (plus several of the schools) has been returned to the local community. In this case, there were problems with fraudulent certification of educators by the district, which contributed to low student performance on the Stanford 9. As soon as the certification issue was remedied, in a year's time, the student scores improved and the state exited the district. The official mentioned that this case is a rare instance of a quick remedy; in general, intervention within a district (as distinct from a school) is much more complex.

North Carolina

North Carolina has the authority to reconstitute a school. It has been intervening in schools for many years but only in the 2001-2002 school year has it declared a school critically under-performing. North Carolina uses an intense diagnostic process. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has developed tools for evaluation of schools, principals and teachers. The intervention team uses these tools to evaluate schools and personnel on a continuous basis and to identify technical assistance and professional development needs. Though North Carolina is still developing the district intervention process, the state currently has the authority to intervene in a district and will if a school intervention team determines that the district is impeding improvement of the school.

School intervention strategies are in the fifth year of implementation. The 2001-2002 school year is the first year that NCDPI has declared schools *critically* under-performing. Districts are seen as partners in the school intervention process. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has the power to intervene in districts, but is still in the process of developing this intervention. The state may intervene in a district if during a school intervention the district is found to be impeding school improvement and student achievement. Intervention in a district because it is impeding a school intervention is a unique feature of the North Carolina accountability system.

NORTH CAROLINA – School Intervention

Performance Criteria	**Improvement on statewide student assessment** **Statewide goal for student achievement**
Strategic Criteria	Decisions about intervention are made by the NC Board of Education. There are two levels of intervention: **voluntary assistance level** schools that have not met the performance criteria but where less than 50% of students are failing. **mandated assistance level** applies when a school is under-performing and more than 50% of the students are failing.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Assistance Team** is comprised of teachers (currently practicing), staff, higher education representatives, school administrators and retired educators. These teams work full-time within the schools. The team must: "Review and investigate the facets of the school operations and assist in developing recommendations for improving student performance." (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2002) "Evaluate the certified personnel assigned to the school and make findings and recommendations concerning their performance." (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2002)
Corrective Intervention	**Assistance Teams** primarily work with teachers to build their classroom capacity, provide leadership coaching for the principal, and improve school climate (discipline, student supports, safety, etc.). *NOTE: The work of the Assistance Team is dependent on the review and investigation. There is a focus on customizing the intervention strategy for the school.*

Target	Tactic
Students	Students in under-performing schools currently have no recourse. Many of the schools had come off the list after a year (not those that are chronically under-performing). The NCDPI is filing legislation to provide options for students.
Teachers	The assistance team using the "Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument" evaluates teachers. For observations, the team uses the "Formative Observation Data Instrument" for collection of data and the "Formative Observation Data Analysis" to summarize the observation findings. If a teacher falls below a satisfactory level, the assistance team assists the teacher providing on-going support and evaluation. If there is no improvement, the Assistance Team may recommend the teacher for dismissal to the State Board of Education.
Principal	The Principal is evaluated by the Assistance Team using the "Principal Performance Appraisal Instrument." Periodically, throughout the school year, the principal must meet with the Assistance Team to discuss the performance appraisal. If the principal is found to be below satisfactory in any of the categories, the district superintendent is notified and has the authority to dismiss or put the principal on an action plan to improve.
Classroom	Funds are given to under-performing schools to reduce class size.
District	The District is a partner in the process of school intervention. *Note: District intervention may occur if the Assistance Team finds the district is impeding school improvement (see District Intervention)*
Exit Criteria	**Recommendation of the Assistance Team and Consultant**

Assistance Teams are part of the North Carolina initiative, "ABC'S of Public Education." The ABC's is a "reform initiative that is designed to improve student performance in reading, writing and mathematics. The plan provides accountability for student performance at the school level, focus on the basic skills and control and flexibility at the local level to ensure that those closest to the students have the authority to make decisions that impact student achievement" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2002). One interesting facet of the North Carolina approach is the idea that more flexibility is given to the school administration and educators in the classroom. If the assistance team is working within the school, this is a monitored function, but it is possible to see how this may lead to creative approaches within the classroom focused on student achievement.

The Principal Performance Appraisal Instrument (PPAI), the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI), the Formative Observational Data Instrument (FODI) and the Formative Observational Data Analysis (FODA) are all tools developed for North Carolina School interventions. Assistance Team members are trained to use these tools prior to entering the school. In the case of FODI/FODA, assistance team members go through 24 hours of training.

Each assistance team is assigned a NCDPI employee liaison and a consultant to facilitate communication between the state and the school. The consultant conducts regular site visits to the school and reports findings to the NCDPI liaison. This is a support to the team and NCDPI, because it allows the Assistance Team to focus on the school by removing some of the administrative burden of state reporting requirements and it meets the communication requirements of the NCDPI.

Evidence of turnaround (exit criteria) within a school is broader than the initial criteria used to identify the school as under-performing. Evidence includes:

Improvement on student test scores, meeting improvement goals set by the state.
School capacity , building on the strengths of school leaders, faculty and staff.
The continuous improvement plan shows an ability to improve and sustain improvement.
Data-driven decision-making is occurring at all levels of the school.

Exit from an intervention is based on test scores and recommendations by the assistance team and consultant. Then the evidence is presented to the state board of education for approval. These broadened criteria give the state the option to remain in a school until improvement may be sustained. When developing exit criteria, it is important to leave a school in shape to function, improve and sustain improvement once the state intervention ends.

Though NCDPI is now in the development phase of its district intervention system, there are some ways that the state may intervene in a district. Interestingly, these interventions are rooted in the school intervention process. Currently, district intervention occurs in cases when the district is found to be impeding school improvement.

NORTH CAROLINA – District Intervention*

Performance Criteria	Over half of the schools in a district are designated low performing; or The Assistance Team finds that the superintendent has failed to cooperate with the Assistance Team or otherwise hindered the district's and/or school's ability to improve.
Strategic Criteria	District accountability is still being developed, but any district which the Assistance team finds is impeding school improvement is taken over.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Assistance Team** findings are part of the diagnosis; in other cases it is purely based on the established criteria of over half the schools being designated under-performing. The State Board of Education gives final approval.
Corrective Intervention	**Interim Superintendent** is assigned the duties of the superintendent (employee of the state).
Target	**Tactic**
Superintendent	The state board of education has the power to remove responsibilities from the superintendent.
Local Board	Local Board power is suspended if it fails to cooperate with the interim superintendent.
Central Office	Financial Manager for the district may be removed depending on the severity of the Assistance Team's findings.
Exit Criteria	**Recommendation of the Assistance Team**

** North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is still in the process of developing the district intervention.*

There are two big challenges that North Carolina faces. First, weak districts make school turnaround difficult. To counter this challenge, Assistance Teams in North Carolina have the ability to recommend to the State Board of Education that the superintendent be dismissed if s/he is found to be impeding the improvement of a school. The second challenge is that weaker teachers tend to be transferred to low performing schools. To counter this challenge, legislation recently passed states that a superintendent who is transferring teachers into a low performing school must first publicly announce the transfer. This gives the local community the opportunity to challenge the transfer. According to the NCDPI official, since the passage of this legislation, teacher transfers have been reduced.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction intervention model requires considerable resources and capacity. Assistance Teams often work with a school for a year or more and are paid employees of the state. NCDPI also uses consultants to facilitate communication and relieve the burden of reporting requirements from the school and assistance team. NCDPI at the state level has shown the ability to change and alter practices. The ABC's is a new approach, but, prior to that, there was a similar distinguished educators intervention. In North Carolina intervention is methodical and pragmatic with systems and tools in place for meaningful, focused intervention in schools. Because of the newness of the program, there is no research evaluating the implementation of this model; however, it is well documented and designed to facilitate clear communication among all stakeholders.

Kentucky

Kentucky does not currently have the legal authority to reconstitute a school or district, but does permit students to transfer to another "performing" public school if the school they are currently attending is declared under-performing (Quality Counts, 2002). Kentucky's initial education reform legislation was used as a model for many other states' education reform legislation (including Massachusetts'), which makes it an interesting example to consider. As a state, Kentucky has been holding schools and districts accountable since 1993. Intervention in Kentucky stands out because, like North Carolina, the state department of education has taken a great deal of time to implement a school and district intervention strategy, allowing for a thoroughly thought out process and for input from all stakeholders. Also evident in Kentucky is an attempt to continuously improve the accountability system. The recent reauthorization of the Kentucky Education Reform Act made significant changes and added many details of school accountability to focus on student learning. The time to turn around a school through state intervention varies from school to school Kentucky has identified 17 key leverage points for turning schools around (Attachment B).

To date, two districts have been intervened in by the state. District intervention will not become high stakes (superintendents and principals may be dismissed) until 2004.

KENTUCKY – School Intervention

Performance Criteria	**Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS)** o Kentucky Core Content Test o Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) o Student Writing Portfolios **A state goal for 2014** has been legislatively established. Each school is given an **improvement chart** based on two years of CATS data to establish a baseline and drawing a line between this baseline and the established statewide goal for 2014. This line sets the goal for each two-year period until 2014. **Retention, attendance, dropout rates** are also part of the school accountability system.
Strategic Criteria	Three levels of under-performing schools are designated. **Level 1** – the top 1/3 of under-performing schools must conduct a self-evaluation. **Level 2** – the middle 1/3 of under-performing schools goes through the Scholastic Audit and must follow suggestions from the audit. **Level 3** – the bottom 1/3 of under-performing schools goes through the Scholastic Audit and must take recommendations from the report as a mandate.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Scholastic Audit** conducted in the bottom 2/3 of under-performing schools.
Corrective Intervention	Level 3 schools (the bottom 1/3 of schools below the assistance line) receive the following: **Commonwealth School Improvement Funds** are primarily for Level 3 schools but are sometimes available to Level 2 Schools. **A "Highly Skilled Educator" (HSE)** is a teacher who is considered exemplary. The person is an employee of the state and is selected through a rigorous interview process. There is one HSE per school. The primary goal of the educator is to facilitate change using the information from the audit.

Target	Tactic
Students	Students in under-performing schools are permitted to transfer to the nearest school that is not under-performing.
Teachers	Teachers are evaluated every six months. If there are weak areas, a corrective action plan is developed. This includes professional development opportunities.
Principal	The Principal may be impacted by the intervention, but this depends on the results of the audit.
District	The District is a partner in the process of school intervention.
Exit Criteria	**Meeting Mandates in the Scholastic Audit**

There are three levels of "assistance line," or under-performing schools. Level 1 includes the top third of the schools below the assistance line. Level 1 schools are required to conduct a self-review with tools provided by the state and then submit a revised improvement plan. Level 2 schools in the middle third of the "below assistance line" schools go through a Scholastic Audit and follow recommendations from the audit. Level 3 schools, the bottom third of assistance line schools, are those that go under the most intense intervention. This tiered approach is attributed to limitations in the capacity of the state to support assistance line schools.

The Kentucky Department of Education avoids the "one best way" intervention by intensely focusing on the diagnostic intervention (Scholastic Audit) and using the results of this to customize

the work of the Highly Skilled Educator. Though leadership and instructional practice are typically the focus of the Highly Skilled Educator, there is an obvious reluctance to make assumptions about a school prior to an audit. Consequently, discussing the intervention at a general level is somewhat difficult.

KENTUCKY – District Intervention

Performance Criteria	**Each District has a ratio developed based on the number of students and schools and expected improvement** using the same data from the school intervention (CATS).
Strategic Criteria	Different levels of under-performing schools are designated. **"Probation"** - Districts that are under-performing are given two years to improve using information for the Scholastic Audit. **"Takeover"** - After two years of being on probation. If there is no improvement, the state intervenes by assigning a Highly Skilled Educator and possibly a State Manager.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Scholastic Audit** is an audit designed for the district by the KDE.
Corrective Intervention	Probation and Takeover districts receive the following: **A "Highly Skilled Educator" (HSE)** who is a teacher that is considered exemplary. The person is an employee of the state and is selected through a rigorous interview process. HSE's go through the same training as in school interventions and are given additional training. The number of HSE's is dependent on the size of the district. **State Manager** is assigned to districts that do not improve on the CATS over a period of two years. The state manager is an employee of the KY Department of Education.
Target	**Tactic**
Students	Students in under-performing schools are permitted to transfer to the nearest school that is not under-performing outside the district at the cost of the "home district."
Teachers	Teachers may be impacted by the intervention, but this depends on the results of the audit.
Principal	Principals are mandated to take twelve hours of professional development in areas targeted by the audit.
Local board	Local Board may be removed, depending on the severity of the problems.
Exit Criteria	**Evidence of data driven decisions** **Development of a Consolidated Plan** ***(Improvement Plan)*** **Improvement on CATS**

The high stakes pieces of district intervention (i.e., the removal of the superintendent and/or principals and board) are expected to be implemented in 2004. The audit and monthly reports from the HSE's and State Manager inform the process. Again, what this looks like is dependent on the demand for district intervention and what the state's capacity to supply support.

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Texas

Texas has the authority to close schools, reconstitute schools and permit students to transfer from under-performing schools. Texas school intervention is integrated into an existing district intervention system. District interventions are triggered by a complaint made by local board members, a superintendent or community members as opposed to student test scores. The dynamic of district level "complaints" means the state does not intervene unless "invited" by the local community. School intervention occurs when, in a three year cycle, student test scores are under-performing. School intervention, utilizing the same intervention trigger mechanism, places the intervention "monitor" at the district level, but focused on the needs of the school. Another interesting facet of the Texas model is the sanction of the state's making the district pay for the daily rate and expenses of a state mandated monitor.

TEXAS – School Intervention

Performance Criteria	**Overall Student performance on tests** (TAAS), three year cycle of low performance **Drop-Out Rate** **Disaggregated student achievement by student group (race and SES)** – Not only must the schools have the overall student average at a set goal, but student groups by race and SES within a school must also meet that goal.
Strategic Criteria	All schools that do not meet the performance criteria are reviewed and a determination of whether to send in a monitor is made.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Review Team** comprised of superintendent, principals, educators and state education employees who conduct a 1.5 – 2 day interview. They develop a report which is approved by the state Board of Education. Within the report are recommendations for areas which the school must improve on. These recommendations are called "sanctions."
Corrective Intervention	**Monitor** is assigned to a school, but resides in the district office. The cost of the monitor is the responsibility of the district (est. $400/day + expenses). The monitor works with school based on the sanctions from the diagnostic intervention. The monitor is trained for one full day and is usually a retired superintendent of principal. Monitor is usually in school between 2-5 days per month for as long as a 1.5 years.

Target	Tactic
Students	Public Education Grants (PEG) which allow students to apply to any school within the state if s/he is attending a low performing school. If the student is accepted, the school will receive the PEG funds which cover attendance costs for the student.
Teachers	Teachers are provided with professional development. Some exemplary teachers are offered stipends to work in low-performing schools (district-dependent).
Principal	Principal is provided coaching by the monitor.
District	District is responsible for paying the monitor, and the monitor intervention within the school is a state mandate.
Exit Criteria	**Achievement of Review Team recommendations.** **Monitor determines the school is ready to be released.**

Criteria for school intervention are primarily focused on the TAAS. The monitor or master will work at the district level with a school to increase the school's capacity to improve. Paying for the state-mandated monitor is a financial sanction against the school district. This may be an incentive for district support in approving student achievement. The Texas Education Agency attempts to match the skills of the monitor to the needs of the school based on the review teams findings. For example if a school has a high special education population, the TEA might match a monitor with a special education background to the school. The return of a school to local control is at the discretion of the monitor, which gives some room to make decisions about whether the improvement a school makes will be sustained.

New Jersey

New Jersey is much different from the previous states because it intervenes solely at the district level. The New Jersey education reform legislation was passed in the late 1980's and focuses on the issues of governance and leadership as problems that cause low student achievement. Incentive to intervene at the school level is low due to the *Abbott* court cases which "address the educational disadvantages" of students in the 28 poorest urban districts within the state (Erlichson, Goertz & Turnbull, 1999). *Abbott* decision provides financial resources to districts and schools. Many *Abbott* decisions have been made since the initial case, the best known being *Abbott V* (1998) which "called for the implementation of whole school reform, school-based budgeting, full day kindergarten, half day pre-school for three and four year olds, coordinated social services, school security plans, the infusion of technology, the formation of alternative schools, accountability plans, and School-to-Work or college transition programs" (*Ibid.*, p. 4). The three districts the state has taken over are *Abbott* districts. Because of the Court decisions, the state continues to concentrate only on district intervention. The presumptive length of state takeover is five years, though it often is longer.

Another interesting facet of New Jersey's district accountability system is the exit criteria. The exit criteria require that a district be at "certification" level before it will be returned to the local community. This means that even if the district is stable and may be on the road to recovery, the state must remain in the district until this goal is met. Other districts, not controlled by the state, are able to be "certified with conditions" which is a status that recognizes the district's ability to self-correct or solve any of the "conditions" that do not meet certification criteria. In this case, the exit criteria are so high that the state must continue to intervene in the district, though there is a belief that the district is ready and able to improve and function without intervention. The New Jersey Department of Education is in the process of changing the exit criteria through legislation.

NEW JERSEY – District Intervention

Performance Criteria	**8 broad elements evaluated,** including 31 sub-indicators: 1. Quality Assurance 2. School-Level Planning 3. Curriculum and Instruction 4. Pupil Performance 5. Pupil Behavior 6. Teaching Staff/Professional Development 7. School Resources 8. Mandated Programs
Strategic Criteria	Three levels of under-performing districts. **Level 1** – certified with conditions which the district is able to meet on its own. **Level 2** - "non-compliant" which triggers the External Review Team diagnostic intervention. **Level 3** – triggers a CCI (diagnostic intervention). After this investigation, the State Board of Education decides whether to place the district back in Level 2, or take over the district.
Diagnostic Intervention	**External Review Team** makes recommendations for improvement. The team is responsible for monitoring this improvement. If the district does not improve there is a : **Comprehensive Compliance Investigation (CCI)** led by the DOE to identify obstacles to compliance and recommend corrective action. If the district is found to be "unwilling or unable to take necessary actions," the Board of Education may decide to takeover.
Corrective Intervention	**Superintendent is replaced** and the State District Superintendent (regional manager) takes over. Required to provide regular reports to the DOE, including an annual report of progress. **Lead Curriculum, Business and Finance Personnel are removed** **Internal Audit** is led by the State District Superintendent. In the first year, the State District Superintendent reviews, evaluates and takes action on the central district office structure. After eighteen months all principals and vice principals are evaluated. **Local Advisory Board** is appointed by Mayor and Commissioner of Education in place of the local school board. A fifteen member advisory committee is appointed. Three of the appointments are made by the local mayor and the remaining appointments are made by the Commissioner of Education (local appointees). Powers are returned to the advisory board over a period of four years. In the fifth year the advisory members are elected by the community (only advisory members may run for election) and the top nine vote getters become the local board.

Target	Tactic
Principal & Vice Principals	Principals' and Vice Principals' tenure rights are suspended. They are evaluated by the State District Superintendent within 18 months of takeover.
Lead District Personnel	Lead District Personnel are removed
Superintendent	Superintendent is terminated.
Local Board	Local Board is abolished.
Exit Criteria	**Must meet all of the eight broad criteria for certification.**

School and District Intervention Decision Making Framework

The theory underlying the New Jersey education legislation passed in the late 1980's was that if leadership and governance are improved at the district level, then the school level will improve. New Jersey still works under this premise, and consequently focuses on district level intervention. The *Abbott V* decision that came down in 1998, after many other decisions, provides financial resources to the neediest districts and prescribes a system of whole school reform for schools within the districts (Erlichson, Goertz, Turnbull, 1999). Schools within *Abbott* districts are given funding and required to select a whole school reform model, established by an external entity (consultant or group, e.g., Success for All, Comer Model). The *Abbott* district funding has made school level state intervention less of a need, though the state monitors the schools through School Reform Improvement Teams (Erlichson, Goertz, Turnbull, 1999).

All districts in New Jersey are reviewed in eight broad areas to be certified within the state. If a district is not "certified" it may fall into one of three categories. Level 1 is "certified, with conditions" for districts that have the potential to improve without state intervention. Level 2 is "non-compliant" which triggers a diagnostic intervention. The Level 2 district has one year to comply. If it does not it becomes a Level 3 district which prompts a Comprehensive Compliance Investigation (CCI). A CCI is conducted by the DOE to determine the obstacles to the district taking "corrective actions." It is at this point that the state may decide to take over a district.

Illinois

Illinois has been intervening in schools since at least the mid-1990's. Currently in transition, the State Board of Education is shifting the focus from school interventions to district interventions. This shift is based on the state's belief that a district focus is more likely to lead to sustainable improvement at the school level and to accommodate the limited capacity (human and financial resources) of the state to intervene. To build state capacity to improve student achievement, the state is investing in a "train-the-trainer" type of model. This allows districts to develop a system of intervention in schools that is integrated into a district wide system, and that places the responsibility for school improvement at the district level.

School interventions are still occurring in Illinois. Because the state recently changed the student assessment system from the IGAP to the Illinois Achievement Test (ISAT) and the Prairie State Achievement Test (PSAT), the designation of schools as under-performing has been suspended. The state Board of Education is currently in the process of reorganizing and aligning intervention strategies between under-performing Title I schools and other non-Title I schools. Illinois school intervention is a moving target, and it looks like much of the intervention responsibility will soon be in the hands of school district personnel.

ILLINOIS – School Intervention

Performance Criteria	If 50% of students are low performing on the: **Illinois State Achievement Test** (ISAT) for elementary and middle schools, or **Prairie State Achievement Test** (PSAT) for high schools. (A combination of ACT and an Illinois standards test).
Strategic Criteria	**Warning List** – Schools remain on this list for two years and are required to develop a school improvement plan. Schools may remain on this list for longer than two years if there is evidence of an improvement trend. **Watch List** – Schools that do not improve on the warning list are placed on the Watch list. Schools on the watch list are intervened in one of two ways. Title I Schools are managed by the Title I Division which is part of the state's whole school reform initiative for Title I Schools Other schools are managed by the School Improvement Division
Diagnostic Intervention	There are currently two diagnostic interventions, one used for Title I schools and the other based on the Illinois standards. The state is currently integrating these.
Corrective Intervention	**Whole School Reform** – Title I schools implement a model of whole school reform, by selecting an external partner (e.g., Modern School House, Roots and Wings) to support them in implementing whole school reform. **Teacher(s) in Residence** – work with non-Title I schools to support the development and implementation of the school improvement plan
Target	**Tactic**
Teachers	Teachers are provided with Professional Development opportunities, dependent on diagnostic intervention.
Principals	Principals are coached by the Teacher in Residence to implement the School Improvement Plan.
Exit Criteria	**Student Performance on the ISAT or PSAT (high school test).**

School and District Intervention Decision Making Framework

Changes in the student assessment system in Illinois have led to a break in school intervention strategies. In the 2001-2002 school year, the Illinois Board of Education is piloting its district intervention strategy through the Accountability Department. The concept behind District intervention is to intervene at points where there is possibility for long-term, sustained student improvement. Although the system of intervention is still in development, the intention is to build the capacity of the district to intervene in schools for improved student achievement.

ILLINOIS – District Intervention *(In Development)*

Performance Criteria	Single school in the District has **less than 50% of students passing the ISAT or PSAT**
Strategic Criteria	District Intervention is currently being developed, draft of **District Designation** currently shows three levels of district categories. **Level 3** – 33% to 49.9 of student scores meet or exceed standards. **Level 2** - Must develop a District Improvement Plan with a "performance agreement". Eligible for state and federal grants for low achieving schools. **Level 1** – 0 to 16.9% of student scores meet or exceed standards. Must develop a District Improvement Plan with a "performance agreement". In each instance, the district is eligible for state and federal **grants for low-achieving schools**. Two consecutive years on this list and district may be moved to the "Warning List." If yearly progress is not made, then could be placed on a "Watch List" (still in process)
Diagnostic Intervention	Districts are assessed using a **state-designed assessment based on the Baldridge in Education Criteria** for Performance Excellence. 1. Leadership 2. Strategic Planning 3. Student, Stakeholder, and Market Focus 4. Information and Analysis 5. Faculty and Staff Focus 6. Process Management 7. Organizational Performance Results (Baldridge National Quality Program, 2001)
Corrective Intervention	Because the program is still being piloted, the intervention system has not been developed. There are, however, two levels of corrective action status: **Warning List** – Districts on the warning list must show signs of improvement. If there is no evidence of improvement and the district is on the list for two consecutive years, the district may be moved to the Watch List. **Watch List** – Districts on the Watch list presumably receive the highest level of state intervention.
Target	Target
Students	In-process
Teachers	In-process
Principal	In-process
Exit Criteria	**In-process, but currently improvement on student scores**

(Illinois State Board of Education, 2002)

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Illinois is piloting school district intervention during this school year. The consequences and processes of intervention are still in the process of being developed. Also, the connection to the school intervention is still being integrated into the district intervention strategy. The shift in focus from the school to the district is part of a reorganization at the state level. It is supported by an older law which requires districts to develop a plan to intervene in under-performing schools. The Accountability Department within the Illinois State Board of Education is developing a diagnostic intervention system based on the Malcolm Baldridge *Education Criteria for Performance Excellence* (2001). These criteria will direct how state intervention occurs, though it is not yet fully developed.

District Interventions in Schools

The following are examples of district interventions in schools from two of the nation's largest urban districts, Chicago and New York. In both cases, the District has developed an accountability system that is integrated into the state accountability system. Like state intervention, district intervention focuses on student improvement at the school level, but unlike the state, the district is in a position to direct district resources to support a number of under-performing schools within the district. The ability of the state to direct this kind of support is not as easy because of the breadth of schools the state oversees, ranging from high performing to under-performing.

The district level school accountability systems are used as early warning signals for the state accountability system. District level intervention in schools is interesting because it places responsibility for school improvement in the hands of the district and because it extends the capacity of the state Department of Education by increasing the support and targeted assistance given to schools.

Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public School District has developed a comprehensive school intervention strategy, which includes external support, onsite support, and support from within the district and state. By integrating district level school accountability interventions with state-level interventions, Chicago Public School district is poised to play an active role in improving student achievement. This comprehensive approach creates a system of district and school reform supported by the district and state.

The school intervention strategy in Chicago is "designed to incorporate both support and consequences" (Burns, 2001). Support comes from the intervention team of a probation manager and external partner to facilitate school readiness to improve student achievement. Consequences include lesser degrees of local control, depending on the severity of the situation, and the threat of reconstitution (Burns, 2001).

Chicago District Intervention in Schools

Performance Criteria	**District designates school "probation" status**: Less than 15% of students scoring above "national norms" on the: Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) - elementary schools Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) - high schools **State designates school remediation status** if 50% of students are performing below standards on the: Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) for elementary and middle schools Prairie State Achievement Test (PSAT) for high schools. (A combination of ACT and an Illinois standards test)
Strategic Criteria	**Probation (district determination)** using above criteria *Schools on the "borderline" have other criteria used, including:* Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) Attendance rates Dropout rates **Remediation (state determination)** Title I schools are focused on whole school reform and are managed by the Title I division Other schools are managed by the School Improvement Division
Diagnostic Intervention	School Assessment conducted by the Chicago PS district Accountability Office begin immediately. Assessment includes teacher and principal performance reviews and assessment of the Local School Committee's capacity to govern. A school improvement plan is developed based on information from the diagnostic intervention.
Corrective Intervention	**Probation Manager** – Oversees implementation of the School Improvement Plan and the "development of long-term plans, to monitor academic progress, and to provide support in school leadership." **External Partners** – provide "holistic support to schools in the improvement of academic performance." **School Operations Managers** (in High Schools) – "Assist with the day-to-day operations to allow the principals to focus on their primary role as educational leaders."

Target	Tactic
Students	
Teachers	Teachers have performance reviews.
Principals	Principals have performance reviews. The Principal remains as the leader of the school, however, if there are serious problems with the principal, s/he may be dismissed.
Local School Committee	Local School Committees' capacity to govern is assessed. If the Local School Committee(LSC) is functioning, the LSC becomes a partner in the school improvement process. If the LSC is not functioning, the probation manager will facilitate changes in the LSC to create a high functioning committee that will be able to partner and support school improvement.
Exit Criteria	**Evidence that the "Corrective Action Plan" has been implemented** **Improvement trends on the ITBS/TAP/ISAT** **Improvement in "Five Essential Areas"** School leadership Professional development and training Developing a quality instructional program Developing a student-centered learning environment Parent and community involvement

(Chicago Public Schools, 2002)

Chicago Public Schools has developed its own accountability measures to be prepared to meet those imposed by the state of Illinois (ISAT/PSAT). Probation is a district intervention in a school and is intended to last for one year, but may last until corrective action has taken place, with annual reviews of progress (Chicago Public Schools-A, 2002). This relationship between the district and the state accountability system is mutually supportive. The district is able to develop district-wide supports to improve student achievement. The Summer Bridge program is a summer school program developed by the district to support students who do not meet the eighth grade promotion criteria. Students attend summer school sessions and are tested at the end of the school session. The district has also developed Academic Preparatory Centers (APC's) for students who are not eligible for promotion from the eight grade and who have not successfully completed the Summer Bridge Program. Students are taught in classes of no more than twenty students by a certified teacher. Class size is small and the school-day is extended. Focus on literacy, reading, writing, mathematics and ESL tutoring are among the many aspects of the APC's. The district also put out a request for proposals for redesigns of high schools centered on small learning communities. These resources are examples of the types of support a district is able to provide readily to schools, and is sustainable without intervention from the state. Each of these are part of the district's *Children First Education Plan* (Chicago Public Schools, 2002).

An interesting facet of the Chicago intervention is the piggybacking on the state system, and the incentive the state accountability system has given to the Chicago Public Schools to look at school and district reform in a more systematic way. Examples of this systemic thinking are the shared resources and integration of funds. For example, "districts and schools share funding for the external partner," and the $29 million is committed to the probation strategy (Burns, 2001).

New York City – Chancellor's District

The Chancellor's District is comprised of forty-six elementary and middle schools and ten high schools. The district spans four of the five boroughs. It began as a strategy to intervene in and improve schools in 1996. Each of these schools is designated by the State of New York criteria as a "School Under Registration Review" (SURR). The Chancellor's district imposes whole school reform models and tighter district level controls on schools to improve their capacity to improve student achievement. The New York City Chancellor's District is an example of how district capacity can improve student achievement.

New York City – Chancellor's District

Performance Criteria	**New York State determined criteria** **Elementary and Middle Schools** Student performance on 4th and 8th grade Math and English/Language Arts Assessments **High School** Performance on High School Math & English/Language Arts Assessment Drop-out Rate
Strategic Criteria	New York State uses a continuum of intervention **Below state standard** – In districts where a school falls below the state standard, the district is required to develop a local assistance plan. **Below state standard and failure to make adequate progress over 2 years** – In districts where a school fails to make adequate progress, the school is required to develop a school improvement plan in partnership with the district. **Below state standard, failure to make adequate progress and Title I** – In Title I schools that fall within these criteria, a district is required to develop a corrective action plan. **School Under Registration Review (SURR)** – Those schools that are "furthest from the state standard and in most need of improvement" are put into the Chancellor's District.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Registration Review Visit** – An external team visits the school for several days. Information from the team's report becomes the basis of the school improvement plan.
Corrective Intervention	**Schools are put into the Chancellor's District**, a district for SURR schools within New York City. This district imposes tighter controls and more oversight over the individual schools, in other words strengthens schools through improved district capacity. **Success for All** whole school reform model is implemented in each of the schools (K-6). **Five School-Based Staff Developers** are placed at each school. Areas of concentration are: technology, literacy, Success For All facilitator and Teacher Center facilitator.
Target	**Tactic**
Students	Students "out of the zone" of the school are not accepted into the school. Students are able to transfer to other non-SURR schools.
Teachers	Teachers are evaluated. All new hires are required to be certified teachers. All non-certified teachers are allowed to remain in the school and given the opportunity to learn the new system. As a joint venture with the teachers' union, there are Teacher Centers in each Chancellor's District School. These centers train staff (on a volunteer basis) to improve instructional strategies.
Principals	Principals lead the school. Many of the schools within the Chancellor's District did not have Principals when they entered the district. In those cases, an interim principal is assigned. The decision on the appointment of a new principal is made by a committee (called a C-30).
Exit Criteria	**School has met the SASS criteria** **Home district has the capacity to continue supporting the school's improvement.**

One of the challenges of the Chancellor's District is the exit criteria. Some schools may be off the SURR list, but, because the school's home district is not capable of sustaining the gains the school has in the Chancellor's District, the decision to return control of a school to the district is a difficult decision. This speaks to the idea that district capacity is an essential element to improvement on student assessments and school improvement.

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Massachusetts

The following is a brief description of intervention within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This information will aid policy makers in making decisions about intervention in Massachusetts based on the strategies that currently exist.

Massachusetts has been implementing a School Intervention System due to low performance on MCAS scores since 2000. District accountability is scheduled to be piloted in 2002. The school intervention system within Massachusetts is focused on data driven decision-making and school improvement planning. When intervening in a school the focus is on building capacity for staff to improve student achievement and providing the resources to achieve this goal.

MASSACHUSETTS – School Intervention

Performance Criteria	**Improvement and goal of school-wide MCAS scores**
Strategic Criteria	**School Review Panel** – Review panel comprised of educators, principals, superintendents and DOE employees review the school over a half-day visit through observation, interviews and focus groups. The panel makes a recommendation to the Commissioner on whether this school should be declared under-performing. **One school per district is selected** Upon identification the state may decide to: 1. **Decide not to intervene.** Each school selected for a Panel Review is given a $25,000 school improvement grant. 2. **Defer intervention decision.** Schools are given funds and encouraged to participate in the School Improvement Plan Retreat and revise their school improvement plan. 3. **Intervene in the school.** Schools are required to participate in the School Improvement Plan Retreat and present a new improvement plan within six months of intervention. Each Level three school is assigned a liaison from the Targeted Assistance Division.
Diagnostic Intervention	**Fact Finding Team** – A week long evaluation of the schools the state is intervening in.
Corrective Intervention	**Targeted Assistance Liaison** from the Department of Education is assigned to the school to facilitate the implementation of the school improvement plan.
Target	**Tactic**
Students	Students in under-performing schools are not given any special options.
Teachers	Teachers are provided professional development opportunities based on the school improvement plan.
Principal	Principal and targeted assistance liaison work together to implement the school improvement
Exit Criteria	In process of being developed

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Reflections and Recommendations

The following then is an effort to distill some guidelines for policymakers based on the above conceptual scheme and case material as well as other work in the area of school reform.

1) Typical Intervention Strategy

As seen in the summary table below, state interventions in schools and districts have, to date, taken a relatively limited number of forms. Diagnostic interventions arise from substantial under-performance on state-wide tests. The diagnosis is generally conducted by a small review team external to the unit (district or school) that is being reviewed. Corrective interventions are increasingly focused at the district level and involve the infusion of an assistance team, professional development, or organizational development specialist. Ideally, a state intervention is focused and consistent; however, variability in the skills of those intervening, the strategies of intervention, and the capacity of the state are each factors that may create inconsistency or less than ideal outcomes.

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT INTERVENTION STRATEGIES BY STATE

State	Diagnostic Intervention	School Intervention	District Intervention
West Virginia	School Improvement Team	Assistance Teams	Assistance Teams
North Carolina	Assistance Team Review	Assistance Team	Interim Superintendent hired by the state (only if school is impeded by district activity) In development
Kentucky	Scholastic Audit	Commonwealth School Improvement Funds Highly Skilled Educator	In development
Texas	Review Team	Monitor	
New Jersey	External Review Team Comprehensive Compliance Investigation		Internal Audit Superintendent is dismissed Local Advisory Board Appointed
Illinois	In-process	Whole School Reform (Title I) Educators in Residence * *Moving toward a District focused Accountability System*	In development
Massachusetts	School Review Panel	Targeted Assistance Liaison	In development

2) Aim High, Start Lower

States still seem to be searching for the most appropriate standards or thresholds for setting their performance criteria and establishing severe under-performance. The feeling in many sectors is that some have set the standards too high, and some have set them too low to be considered in a serious diagnostic analysis. Choosing realistic targets at the outset that gradually increase over time may be a useful strategy for developing a system that is sufficiently challenging without being demoralizing to those who must try to achieve them. In addition, standards should take into account both absolute achievement levels and relative learning gains, so as not to simply "bash" schools that start out with worse-prepared students, while at the same time not accepting excuses.

3) The Importance of Diagnostic Interventions

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that turning around schools and districts is a complex and individualized task. It is a mistake to believe there is a one-size-fits-all policy that will improve academically failing schools or districts. The concept of the diagnostic intervention – perhaps through regular accreditation processes for all districts -- is essential to developing targeted improvement strategies that can address the particular causes of school or district under-performance. The rigor and depth with which these diagnostic interventions are implemented provides intervention teams or individuals, principals, administrators, educators and the community with documented recommendations providing a common understanding of the challenges and expectations of an ensuing state intervention.

4) Seek Local Buy-In

It is generally accepted that strategies that emphasize collaboration or partnering with and supporting schools and districts will be received better than those, such as mandated reforms and reconstitution (Wong, *et al.*, 1999, Borman *et al.*, 2000). Mandated reforms tend to result in low teacher buy-in, which impedes implementation of any new reform.

5) Reconstitution or Takeover as a Last Resort

Reconstitution or takeover is generally seen as an intervention of last resort after other efforts at capacity building have proved unsuccessful. This may well be one of those tactics that is more beneficial as an option that remains available but is not actually exercised.

Though there are cases when the only solution seems to be reconstitution, the challenges that come with this strategy are great. Options of this nature require long-term commitments to re-build a school and regain trust within a community before student achievement may occur. Reconstitution during times of teacher shortages may leave schools in a position where the worst schools have the least experienced teachers. When deciding to use these drastic measures, incentives need to be put in place to reduce some of the common problems of high teacher turnover and an abundance of new educators (rather than a mix of new and experienced educators) (Wong *et al.*, 1999, Borman *et al.*, 2000).

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), in a report on educational accountability, discusses the seriousness of reconstitution and takeover and the conditions that must exist for either to work:

Reconstitution and takeovers can only work under the following conditions:

- [They serve] as a last resort after employing a series of active interventions to help schools improve;
- Criteria for getting out [exit criteria] are adopted before going in;
- The ultimate goal of reconstitution or takeover is to build school capacity and motivation to improve student learning and achievement;
- The school community (teachers, school administrators and families) are involved in making decisions and designing solutions;
- Improvement strategies are based on solid performance and process data combined with meaningful analysis and explanation of school problems;
- A sufficient level of resources is committed; and
- Sufficient time is granted to the project to make it work.

(National Association of State Boards of Education, 1998)

6) Be Realistic About State Capacity

Strategic criteria are important to intervention success and sustainability at the state level. States need to evaluate their capacity to use a variety of resources, including self-study strategies, outside providers, and state agency staff. As indicated in the NASBE report, limited state capacity to intervene is one of the biggest obstacles to intervention and improvement. States' education agencies, as overseers of public education, are responsible for academic achievement for all students within the state. However, they often lack staff and resources necessary for direct intervention in large numbers of schools or districts. As a result they have to choose a smaller number of places in which to become involved. Illinois is an example of a state moving from a school to a district focus for capacity reasons.

7) Consider Different Strategies for Different Performance Levels

In general, the needs of under-performing schools and districts currently exceed the capacity of states to productively intervene. Most states studied use a "tiered" approach to different levels of under-performing schools/districts, targeting the majority of their intervention resources to a limited number of the neediest. However, this can leave "on the cusp" schools/districts without the relatively smaller amount of assistance that might bring them to sustainable levels of achievement.

Alternatively, a state could take a two-track approach, focusing significant diagnostic and technical assistance resources on schools/districts that are on the cusp of success, while piloting in-depth intervention work in a limited number of the most critically under-performing districts to find out what works best in these situations. Depending on resource availability, some jurisdictions are considering other strategies to employ with critically under-performing schools, such as vouchers or other choice options.

8) Focus on Districts

For a number of reasons, states should focus more on interventions at the district than the school level. Not only is this likely to be a more strategic use of limited resources and to lead to more lasting, sustainable and deep-rooted change, but it makes eminent sense in terms of organizational theory not to "leap frog" layers in the organizational hierarchy or chain of authority. The key

school-level leaders – principals -- especially in education reform states, are hired by and responsible to the district superintendent. The superintendent and district level organization play a crucial role in shaping the school's organizational culture, context and resources. (Illinois, again, is an instructive example: intervenors found that when they intervened directly in particular schools, those schools were "written off" by the district infrastructure.)

Perhaps the most powerful support for a district focus for state intervention comes from the research on educational change that indicates that "districts do make a difference" (Fullan, 2001, p. 170). An extensive set of studies has found that when there is, at the district level, strong instructional leadership, accountability systems, support for professional development and an ethos that emphasizes learning and school improvement, there is much greater and more lasting improvement in school and student performance.

One answer to the question of where to begin in a public education accountability system lies in the priorities of those holding schools and districts accountable. If student achievement is the top priority, then the school, as the locus of instructional activities, may make sense as the place to start. If governance and fiscal accountability is the major concern, then the district may be the place to begin. In either case, diagnostic interventions should accommodate the possibility that school failings may have district causes, and vice versa. This is a logical approach. However, lessons from New York City and from Illinois suggest that to sustain improvement on student achievement, schools are the most immediate solution, but the capacity of the district to provide for and support improvement within a school is essential to any type of sustainable effort. Though district intervention is a more complex proposition, focusing on this point of intervention may actually increase the state's capacity to improve student achievement through partnership and training at the district level. Indeed, our sense is that most of these problems need to be examined in context, and an exclusive focus on the school level may not get at the roots of the under-performance.

9) Focus on Instructional Leadership

In evaluating the interplay between a district and its schools, it is critical for states involved in standards-based reform to focus on, and remove barriers to, effective instructional leadership. Kentucky went so far as to pass legislation aimed specifically at this area, the "Effective Instructional Leadership Act" (see Attachment B, item #12). Massachusetts may want to examine this legislation to see if there are needs in the Commonwealth that could be similarly addressed.

10) Exit Criteria Should Indicate Sustainability of Improvement

Many people that we interviewed (as well as, for example, NASBE, 1998) discuss the importance of making exit criteria clear for both the school or district and the state. It is also important to employ exit criteria that will indicate not only that a school/district is no longer under-performing in regard to achievement outcomes but also that it has the ability to sustain its improvement. In interviews, it was noted in regard to several states that, if the exit criteria are the same as those used to identify the school in the first place, a school might come off a list during an intervention year and return to the list the following year. Broadening criteria to include indications of enhanced organizational capacity and administrative processes at the district and school level for sustained improvement upon exiting intervention may counter this concern. Examples of additional exit criteria include evidence of District Improvement Plans, accountability procedures for data-based decision-making, on-going professional development

11) Corrective Interventions – Accentuate the Positive

For some, it is tempting to think that many of the problems in education would disappear if only students, teachers and administrators were sufficiently motivated – if only positive or negative sanctions were sufficiently great (threat of being fired, salary incentives, etc.), then most people would perform to their maximum capacity. It has not been our experience that lack of motivation presents the greatest challenge – or, if it is the case, it relates more to demoralizing working conditions, excessive demands with inadequate resources or professional preparation. We would urge, then, that attention be paid to positive capacity building. The development of the crucial knowledge and skills -- especially through intensive, site-based professional development of teachers, leadership development of administrators, and organizational development of district and school systems – appears to hold the greatest promise for long-term educational reform.

12) Checklist for Policymakers

One way of using the above analysis is as a checklist of the main questions or issues that decision-makers should consider in developing school and district accountability and intervention plans. The following chart offers our initial list of these questions.

SCHOOL & DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY: Questions for Policy Makers

Performance Criteria	What are the public education priorities on which to base performance decisions (e.g., student achievement, fiscal accountability, closing "the gap")? By what measures will adequate performance be determined? (e.g., student scores, attendance rates, graduation/dropout rates, student mobility, teacher mobility?) What percentages of students in a school will need to reach what levels? What rating categories of success will be used on schools or districts -- accreditation? grades? index relative to goal? Will performance be tracked on an absolute threshold and/or percentage improvement basis? What level of performance triggers identification of under-performance? What level of performance triggers state intervention? What amount of time will be allowed for failing schools to demonstrate adequate performance or improvement before the state intervenes?
Strategic Criteria	What is the state's realistic capacity to intervene in failing schools/districts? What are the financial resources available for these efforts? Where is the expertise to conduct various types of diagnostic and corrective interventions? What can the state do itself? What partners can the state enlist? What is the expected time window within which the state needs to show successes? If the state targets the worst-performing districts, or those "on the cusp," what are the resource demands, timeline, and prospects for success with each? What political realities affect a focus on either the worst or the cusp districts? How will the DOE/BOE monitor intervention?
Diagnostic Intervention	How will diagnostic interventions be conducted? How will state priorities be reflected in diagnostic interventions? To what degree can local stakeholders be involved in diagnostic interventions? Is the locus of problems conceived of as being at the school, the district, the community, and the state levels? What personnel, tools, and other resources can be mustered for interventions? What amounts of resources (personnel, money, time) are needed for each potential type of corrective intervention? What are the potential outcomes of a diagnostic intervention? How will corrective resources be deployed, assuming there are diagnostic interventions ongoing in multiple schools/districts?
Corrective Intervention	What is the appropriate type of intervention, based on diagnosis (self-study, financial assistance, expert assistance, professional development, rewards for progress, on-site audits/monitoring, probation, suspension of accreditation, transfer or replacement of staff, transfer of/choice for students, takeover, reconstitution, or closure[4]). What progress measures will be used? What personnel, tools, and other resources are needed for this intervention? What is the timeline (or deadlines) for this intervention? How will information on the intervention be communicated between the school/district and the DOE/BOE?
Target	**Tactic**
Are people, curriculum, or systems the targets? School and/or district?	What specific activities are planned? Which local stakeholders will support the intervention (parents, teachers, administrators, community, media)? Which will oppose it? Who are the key champions to "get on board"?
Exit Criteria	On what basis will a decision to conclude or change the intervention be made?

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[4] List adapted from Duffy (2001).

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ATTACHMENT A

List of Interviewees

Bari Anhalt Erlichson, Ph.D. Professor, Rutgers University

Anonymous, Accountability Department, Illinois State Board of Education

Denise Delorey, Coordinator of Research and Reporting, Accountability and Targeted Assistance Cluster, Massachusetts Department of Education

Dianne Detillo, Branch Manager, Highly Skilled Educators, Kentucky Department of Education

Nicholas Dotoli, Office of State Operated School Districts, New Jersey Department of Education

Jeffrey Eisman, Professor, School of Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Marjorie Elliot, Assistant Superintendent, Chancellor's District, New York City Public Schools

Nyal Fuentes, Education Specialists, Targeted Assistance, Massachusetts Department of Education

Billie Hauser, Senior R & D Specialist, Appalachian Education Laboratory

Dr. Elsie Leak, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Steve McBride, Executive Director, School Improvement, West Virginia Department of Education

Ben Rarick, Director, Office of State Operated School Districts, New Jersey Department of Education

Ron Rowell, Senior Director, School Governance, EEO, & Complaints, Texas Education Agency

Ira Schwartz, Senior Coordinator for Policy and Administration, Office of New York City School and Community Services

Cheryl Ungerleider, Principal Assistant, Kentucky Department of Education

Betty Weed, Program Specialist, Division on Performance Reporting, Texas Education Agency

Todd Ziebarth, Policy Analyst, Education Commission of the States

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ATTACHMENT B

Taken from the Kentucky Department of Education website (www.kde.state.ky.us) on 1/15/02.
Excerpt from: **Scholastic reviews find 17 activities common among successful schools** By Faun S. Fishback

Teachers and administrators in schools struggling to raise student achievement can use these 17 leverage points as a framework for a school improvement strategy:

1. Align curriculum not only within content areas but also vertically, focusing on transition from primary to middle and from middle to high school.

2. Use test scores to identify curriculum gaps.

3. Analyze student work to guide instruction, revise curriculum and instruction, and obtain information on student progress.

4. Analyze students' unique learning needs.

5. Align instructional strategies and learning activities with district, school and state learning goals and assessment expectations for student learning.

6. Assign staff to allow all students to have access to teachers' instructional strengths.

7. Ensure that all students have access to the entire curriculum (for example, school guidance, family resource/youth services centers, extended school services).

8. Provide additional opportunities to support learning beyond initial classroom instruction.

9. Have an intentional plan for building instructional capacity through continuing professional development.

10. Use employee evaluations and individual professional growth plans effectively to improve staff proficiency.

11. Provide follow-up to employee evaluations, and provide support to change behavior and instructional practices.

12. Identify specific instructional leadership needs, have strategies to address them, and use the Effective Instructional Leadership Act requirements as a resource to accomplish these goals.

13. Have a growth plan for administrators and focus it on development of effective leadership skills.

14. Use disaggregated data to plan instruction that meets the needs of a diverse population. Make instruction recommendations part of the school's consolidated plan, and make sure everyone on the staff knows about the plan.

15. Make informed decisions about expenditures of discretionary funds and resources.

16. Tie all resource requests to the school's consolidated plan and identified priority needs.

17. Evaluate the degree to which the school achieves its goals and objectives for student learning.

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